Episode 1

[00:00:00]

**A'Milliana:** Hello, everybody. This is the Be Well MU podcast. This is the mental health series. So the reason why we want to bring back this amazing podcast is because, you know, the demand for services on campus far exceeds the available resources. And not only do we want to promote the resources that we do have for students, but we also want to, you know, give that bridge in between if a student, if, if they are. Scared to come in or something like that. We'll give them the available resources need be. It is hosted by yours, truly a A'Milliana McNeil. I am a Marymount senior here, and I am also a wellness ambassador for the office of wellness and my lovely Co host is Yesenia and she can tell you more about herself.

**Yessenia:** hi everyone. My name is Yesenia arias. I'm one of the new counselors here, I guess I can still [00:01:00] say that this officially, my first year completed here. , I'm one of the counselors in the student counseling services, , and I'm also bilingual and Spanish and I identify as Latina

**A'Milliana:** and today. We will be talking about suicide prevention because it is a very important topic.

And for our special guests, we have Stef Schofer and she could tell you a little bit more about herself as well, too.

**Stef:** Hello. My name is Steph I'm currently a senior at Marymount. I'm majoring in psychology, which also has sparked my passion for mental health and suicide prevention. I'm a criminal justice minor.

I'm excited to graduate in December and yeah. Thank you for having me. I'm glad I'm here today. Can share a little bit here ,

**A'Milliana:** so we were just go jump right into things. So talking about suicide prevention, we should know the warning signs behind it. What are the warning signs

**Yessenia:** yeah, I think it's a really important topic, especially September being [00:02:00] suicide risk awareness month. , I think that oftentimes there's certain things that get, you know, talked about like noticing when someone's feeling down or sad, , and where that is very true. There's certain things that people aren't always aware of to look for.

I think the biggest thing that I. Emphasizes, those changes in behavior. So if you know someone who's really bubbly, outgoing, very social, all of a sudden you stop seeing them, like they're hanging out in the room more often. I think that would be a big sign that, you know, that person might need support.

**Stef:** Yeah. And in my experience, so I was a resident assistant this past year, and I think this is definitely very important because. We want to, you know, we all want to feel safe. We wanna feel able to talk about things that might feel like a burden to us or that we just wanna get out. And especially as an RA, I wanted to make sure all my residents are fine. So, It's very important to be able to feel like you can [00:03:00] open up to someone. And oftentimes the thing personally, it's also just really good. When you have friends, you just ask them once in a while, like, Hey, how are you doing? Sometimes it's not so obvious someone's struggling. They might not be like sharing about it, cuz they're scared.

So I think it's really good to sometimes just really ask an honest, how are you question without just like, Hey fine. How are you? Good. And then you move up on, on about your day, but instead you're like. I really wanna listen to that person. Maybe, you know, you hear stuff coming up or like, oh, I didn't know that.

And then that might already be a good first step to prevent any further problems that someone can open up early and has a chance to talk.

**A'Milliana:** Yeah, that is like really important being the fact that suicide is literally the 10th leading cause of death. And also there are resources that people can have, but not really privy to, , Like on our campus, we do have a whole entire office dedicated to student counseling. And that's the reason why Yessenia is so [00:04:00] important for this conversation for this whole entire podcast, because she gives you an insight into what's actually going on and how we can actually help. , one of the other resources that Marymount does have is care referrals. And I know that Stef has a lot of, you know, Experience with that. So can you like just highlight your experiences dealing with that?

**Stef:** Sure. Yeah so again, in my position as an RA, , we were all trained on like how to react on certain situations. And part of our job was to regularly check in on our residents, see how they're doing and one-on-one conversations. And the way we used the car referrals was that when we had a conversation and we felt like that student might be struggling really no matter what, it can be. Anything from grades to mental health, to struggling with family, really anything where we feel like the student would benefit from extra help. We go online and, , we got a link to fill out a care [00:05:00] referral and yeah, from then on that makes sure that this referral goes to, depending on. What the matter is about it goes to counseling. It goes to the care team. And it's being forwarded from there on to make sure the student can be given the like appropriate help they need by the appropriate offices. And I'm pretty sure Yessenia can say a little bit about that.

**Yessenia:** Yeah. One of the, I think benefits, the care referral is like, you can do it anonymously mm-hmm so I know that staff can do it. Other students can do it. So in your position staff, as like a CA like you could do it. And, , I think that helps, especially if you're. Looking at your friend and you're worried about them, but you are not really sure how to talk to them. And even connecting that back to student counseling services here, , we offer consultation. So we have sat down with people who are like, I'm really worried about this person. I don't know how to talk to them about that. So. It doesn't always have to [00:06:00] be like, you come to us because you want therapy yourself. And sometimes we help you kind of like work through how to have those top conversations. It's not always easy to approach someone when you're worried about them. Yeah. , I mean, especially when we have this. Looming fear about talking about suicide, which is another reason why I think this topic and spending time talking about it is so important, is very taboo. It's very scary. , but it is so essential for us to feel more open, to talk about it.

So we can really support everyone who is struggling with. With thoughts of suicide. Yeah,

**A'Milliana:** That's definitely something to take away from because I've had an experience where I felt worried about my, you know, my friend and I didn't know about the care team, so I didn't know how to like really attack this.

So what I did as a friend, I sat them down alone just to, you know, make sure they feel safe in a safe space. And I just really. I didn't [00:07:00] push. I just let them talk. You know, I want them, I think one of the best things to do, if you see those type of warning signs is to just listen to them and make sure that they're feeling safe in that point in time too.

So I really think some of the ways to really attack. Issue is by, you know, either using your resources and, you know, seeking help from other people because you don't know all the answers. And like in college, we are still learning every single day. If I was a student, if there's any research areas, there's like any surveys or services I would want to know. And I would want like somebody to tell me and not like judge me for not knowing it because I'm still learning. So I think these are all like, really important things to have with us and being on campus. Is there any other organizations that really focus [00:08:00] on this issue? Yeah.

**Stef:** So, Marymount now has its first ever mental health club called speak up. This was started, , actually about a year ago, , spring of 2021. So we're going into our like second full year now. Mm-hmm and it was started, , Based on one of the students here who had experience with the club in her high school.

And so she wanted to bring it to Mary mount and we started it out with her and her friend is co-presidents and I was the vice president and now she's graduated. . So, , I'm taking over the president position and this has been really at my heart because would speak up, , as the word says, our goal is for people to be able to feel like they can speak up mm-hmm about their mental health.

Their mental illness in order to, , go through it, get support and to foster their mental wellbeing and improve their mental health. Or just for anyone who wants to be an advocate for those people or who just wants to be supportive. , [00:09:00] so what we've done as a club to bring suicide awareness and prevention to campus is we have partnered with the American foundation for suicide prevention, AF F S P, and participated in an out of the darkness walk.

That organization, Washington DC. That is a walk to Raise awareness about suicide. You can raise funds, you register to walk. And, , I think this was a really important event because you can really feel the community amongst people and how. You all know, like you're there for a common cost. It's like that underlying connection.

Mm-hmm and you really feel like a purpose and you feel supported and it's a feeling I think we get too rarely in like our everyday

**A'Milliana:** yeah. Community like the actual accepting community. Right.

**Stef:** Because you all kind of know why everybody's there. Like you don't have to hide it from anyone. And because this is so important, , I figured we should have one at Marymount.

So we did that last semester, speak up, organized their own darkness, walk on our very own campus. And [00:10:00] it was great. We had over 70 participants come and we almost reach our fundraising goal for the organization to keep working on suicide prevention and finance themselves. And it was awesome. , It was great seeing it.

So many people were interested in coming. . Whether, , affected themselves, whether advocates, it was really great and a hope for that is really that we are able to just talk more openly about it because as A'Milliana said, it can be scary. It can be stigmatized. It's something like a taboo topic. And. I think to myself that I didn't really know what I can or can talk about in regard to my mental health and my mental illness and the open talking, and then being in my major psychology.

Around like many people with professors and other students has really helped me to see that it's not that scary to talk about it. It's something that we can all. Learn like you [00:11:00] learn how to help someone in first aid. You can learn how to, talk to somebody who might be in a mental health crisis.

It's all so doable. And it is such a good way to like, do something simple and maybe even save a life by doing that. Yeah. And yeah, this helped me a lot in my own journey. And I really hope for the students to show everyone here that we, as a club, like. We wanna create a supportive environment. Yeah. We want students to come to advocate to listen, to share.

and we are always happy to refer to resources. We can't provide any mental health counseling. That's what we have an office for. But we can have a listening ear. We can share the resources with you.

**Yessenia:** Yeah. Yeah. I think that community piece, right? Like being comfortable talking about these things, being able to find a community in which you can discuss things that are really difficult and.

Trainings and, and understanding are huge part of this too. And, and just to kind of plug a training that student counseling services [00:12:00] offered end of CAS got, , which we called the part training P a R T, which stands for something. , as a way to like provide guidance to folks, both staff, students, anyone really, , in response to someone who might be in crisis or struggling.

' Was saying, and you two stuff, it is really intimidating, , to know what to do when you see someone struggling, right?

Yeah. Like, so just even being like I'm freaking out right now, because I'm really worried about this person mm-hmm , , checking in with yourself is so important and is also part of the process. The assessing is like really taking in all the information you have in front of you, whether or not you should take them right then and there to talk to a professional, whether or not you should stay with them a little longer, you know, really getting more information.

I think that's a huge, like, emphasis again on just listening. Yeah. Which is at the heart of all what we're talking about. It's just really taking the time to listen to other people and, and try to understand what they're going through. And I think all of us in this room know that that can be the most [00:13:00] powerful thing to feel heard.

**A'Milliana:** Yes. To feel, to be heard. I feel because I'm a pageant girl. So like, yeah, no, I, I like to talk on stage. I like to be heard. I want, I want the attention to be on me, cuz what I'm saying to you is really important. Not only to me, but should be important to the whole rest of the world. because mental health is very serious and I don't think people, I, I think college students really like think, oh yeah, mental health, but no, this is a serious thing. Like this is the second leading cause of death within. Age group. Yeah. So like, I really, I really think it's important to stress, like how important is to see those warning sides and actually do something about it and be educated enough to know what to do. Yeah. So I thank you both for coming and talking to me about this really important issue.

For the students of Marymount university. , there are many, [00:14:00] many available resources here at, , Marymount that would aid in mental health. Specific there's also resources for, , BIPOC students. , if they need any type of mental health resources, that's outside, we can go onto the website, , in the student counseling service section, and there are, listed resources outside of Marymount that people can reach out to. , and just. Basically just gain more knowledge about mental health and how we can actually, you know, rectify this

**Stef:** issue. Yeah. The resource list was created pretty recently. Yeah. And should be pretty up to date. Mm-hmm with all the new information I actually participated in creating. Yeah. So, and it's up and.

We wanted to be able to reach out to someone stay tuned with SpeakUp has to offer. We are again, participating in the Washington DC out of the darkness, walk for suicide prevention with AF F S P. We have our team up, check out our club like Instagram and, so we [00:15:00] are speak up, like speak up@marymount.edu. Yeah. Is the email address to reach up and our, , Instagram handle. This should be mu. Under underscore and you underscore, , speak up. , you can find us there . You can find all the information there. You can join us on a mu engage that why you receive all our email updates about all the good stuff we're gonna have coming up. Yeah, stay tuned. Reach out, come join our events. Help us fight suicide by walking again with us on October 22nd, save the date

**Yessenia:** and not your last reminder, probably that I will ever do. But counseling services is here to support you either for yourself. , again, like if you wanna talk to about like someone you might be worried about. About, , we can definitely help give you some guidance around how to approach what can be really difficult conversations. And again, the part training, which I think can be really helpful in giving us all tools and in how to have these difficult conversations.

Yeah. And it's [00:16:00] pause, assess, reassure. and then turnover the turnover. Again, being that emphasis is really, really think that they should talk to someone else like a counselor. , then that would be the direction to go. So. The training, flushes it out better than I just did.

**A'Milliana:** and utilize your student leaders.

They're leaders for a reason they want to help you . So if you need to come to the wellness center, there's wellness ambassadors, you can go see your RA. You can go to people within advancement and admissions. Like there's, there's a lot of resources for you.

Don't feel afraid. You only need to say one word, or if you don't even wanna say anything, we have available resources for you to help you. And yeah, that's basically it. Thank you all for tuning in to this episode. We really do appreciate you. We really do appreciate Steph for coming here. Yay.

**Stef:** Well, yeah, thank you for having me.

**A'Milliana:** And we always, and [00:17:00] we'll always be thankful for it. Just. Because she took time out of her day in order to be here. And we'd be a part of this podcast. So yeah, we will be posting every first, Wednesday. And you can hear, listen to us on apple music and Spotify, and you can see the full transcript on Marymount university, just in case you need a little extra.

so all right. Bye. Everyone. Have a lovely day.